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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF IRAQ
WAR AND IRAN ISSUES

Editorial Commentary

-- "A new stage for the Iraqi struggle"

Daily columnist Nahed Hattar writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (03/20): "On the third anniversary of the American invasion of Iraq, the invaders continue to be involved in major military operations, which will fail just like those before, and yet the mere idea that they continue to happen now is a realistic proof of the failure of the occupation to cast its military and security grip over the 'occupied' country. From the viewpoint of the balance of military power, the occupation of a country like Iraq, in terms of its population and armament, is of course expected to fail. But the American presence in Iraq, despite the effective and noble resistance, is ultimately a political presence that stems from the following factors: 1. Alliance with the Kurds; 2. Collaboration with Iran and its influence and militia in Iraq; 3. Shiite Sunni sectarian division; 4. Arab acceptance of the existing status. America's presence in Iraq is political then, and its departure in turn is very possible by political means that begins with unifying the Iraqi national movement and pulling in the ranks of all Iraqi citizens behind the call for the end of the occupation and rebuilding the national state. In my opinion, accomplishing this goal is the only hope for the Iraqis."

-- "The dialogue between 'the viper's head' and the 'axis of evil'"

Chief Editor Ayman Safadi writes on the back-page of independent, centrist Arabic daily Al-Ghad (03/20): "The American-Iranian dialogue that was recently launched is a dialogue of interests dictated by necessity. Each of the two countries has its own tactical reasons for interacting with the other, but no matter how long, expanded or detailed it is, this dialogue will yield limited and momentary successes that do not contribute to bridging the gap between Washington and Tehran. Iran wants to maintain the status of political tension with Washington in line with its ideology that is based on using the idea of Washington being 'the viper's head' to fuel and preserve the revolutionary feeling. Washington, on the other hand, wants to keep Iran as part of the 'axis of evil' in order to use it as fuel for rallying the American people against a terrorism-using foreign enemy. These specifications will not allow the dialogue between the 'viper's head' and the 'axis of evil' to yield any friendly ties. Having said that, the acknowledgement of both parties of the ability of each to affect directly the interests of the other, the upcoming stage is going to witness easing of tension.. Ultimately, Washington will give tactical concessions and so will Tehran, but the outcome will not exceed a momentary formula for co-existence.. What remains is the fact that America's acknowledgement of its need to talk with Iran over the situation in Iraq is a laugh in the face of Washington's claims that it succeeded in achieving its goals from the war on Iraq after three years. What success is this that renders Iraq's stability a negotiating card in Iran's hand?"

-- "Is America in the Iraqi quagmire?"

Columnist Bassam Umoush writes on the back-page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (03/20): "Many politicians, journalists and political party people like to emphasize that America is living in the Iraqi quagmire. So is this true? America is not in a quagmire. It is rather sitting at the table of our nation, eating from here and there, throwing out what it wants and swallowing what it wants. There

is no meaning for its losses in terms of machines because these have already been paid for by Arab and Iraqi money. There is no meaning for its losses in terms of people because the number does not compare with the tens of thousands of Iraqis whose blood was shed at the hands of the Americans, the agents and countries neighboring Iraq.. I suggest to those who talk about America falling in the Iraqi quagmire to reconsider so that they are not part of the misleading media and so that they start to tell us the truth, namely that America killed our people, stolen our money and trampled on our dignity. It is a real winner, as it does not care about the people of the world, international organizations, human rights reports or Security Council resolutions."

-- "Iran wins, America did not win"

Chief Editor Taher Odwan writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (03/19): "Three years have gone since President Bush uttered his famous words from a carrier in the Gulf declaring the completion of the mission and the end of the war. But the war is not over and the mission continues! On the contrary, President Bush's favorite remark (until the end of the mission) has become the most explicit proof that no one knows when the war is going to end. This is what was reflected by the feelings and emotions of world public opinion while marking the anniversary of the war. They are the same feelings that were three years ago.. Going back to the slogan "Iran wins". It is part of the reality, and the proof is that, in the midst of Iran's massive challenge on the issue of nuclear weapons, Washington announces its acceptance to negotiate with Tehran over Iraq. Is this not a victory for the Islamic Republic? The United States negotiates with Iran over Iraq and Israel negotiates with the United States over Palestine. Meanwhile, the Iraqis are absent and the Palestinians are absented. This is the standing formula of the fourth year of the occupation of Iraq, or better still, the war on Iraq that was not started for the sake of America's interests, since Saddam himself safeguarded these interests, but was started for the sake of Israel's security. It is a war by mediation where the Americans wage it on behalf of the Israelis. That is why ever since the occupation of Iraq, the leaders of Israel became smug and trampled on the peace process. After all, no one is good enough, and so they invented the unilateral solution and the idea that there is no partner."

-- "When reason rules the day"

Centrist, influential among the elite English daily Jordan Times English (03/19) editorializes: "Reports that Iran and the United States are ready to sit down for direct talks for the first time in decades is welcome indeed, even if these talks are to be restricted to Iraq. The United States, as the main occupying force, and Iran, as the neighboring country with the greatest influence in Iraq, are duty bound to pool their resources into helping this strife-torn country. It is in the interests of both, and in the interest of Iraqis, that they do so.. As by far the largest group in Iraq, the Shiite community has a special responsibility in this respect. A united Iraq in which all communities have a stake and a say is to the benefit of all Iraqis.. This result will be hastened once Iraq's communities unite in common purpose. There can be no doubt that America is running tired and will be unable to resist pressure, both domestic and international, to take the first, the best opportunity to leave. It would be an outcome to suit everyone. But it is an outcome that will be much harder to reach without U.S.-Iranian cooperation.. There might, of course, be fringe benefits. If Washington and Tehran can learn to deal with each other on a pragmatic and rational level, the nuclear controversy should also become much easier to deal with in a pragmatic and rational way. Who knows, level headedness may yet rule the day."

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